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TAGS: PGOV PREL RO

SUBJECT: GEOANA AGONISTES: PSD DELAYS NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

Classified By: Polcouns Theodore Tanoue for 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) PSD head Geoana has announced that he will postpone by a week the introduction of a no-confidence motion in the Tariceanu cabinet. However, new fissures have appeared within the PSD, with former Prime Minister Nastase openly calling for adoption of a collective PSD leadership system and former President Iliescu continuing to grumble about Geoana's shortcomings. Even erstwhile allies including party spokesman Diaconescu have begun to back away from Geoana; Diaconescu told the DCM that Geoana had blown a big opportunity to form a new government under a PSD Prime Minister by insisting that he had to be Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the PNL appears loathe to throw Geoana a lifeline, and has insisted that it would rather take its chances with a no-confidence vote rather than to offer any new concessions. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Citing the need to finalize the text of a no-confidence motion and to "respect" the election of a new Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, PSD President Mircea Geoana has announced that he will delay by a week his self-imposed deadline for tabling a no-confidence motion against the Tariceanu cabinet. While insisting that it was out of the question that the PSD would back away from introducing the motion, Geoana left open the possibility of a last-minute accommodation with Tariceanu's PNL through the inclusion of PSD ministers in a reshuffled cabinet.

¶3. (C) Geoana's gambit has exposed new splits in the PSD. Former Prime Minister Adrian Nastase in a Rompres interview September 13 evinced unhappiness with his party's disarray under Geoana's leadership and has proposed that the PSD adopt a collective leadership structure comprised of the heads of the various factions of the party. While Nastase's bid to return to the party limelight was quickly repudiated by PSD Secretary General Corlatean, Senate President Vacaroiu and

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others, former Transportation Minister Miron Mitra piled on by calling for an urgent session of the PSD's National Council in order to decide a common party position on the way ahead. Perhaps most ominously for Geoana, former President Iliescu has continued to tell the press that he is "infurated" with Geoana's earlier press remarks that the individuals in the PSD who were opposed to the no-confidence vote were those--like Nastase, Mitrea, and Iliescu--who were being investigated by prosecutors. While Geoana tried subsequently to walk back his comments, the harm had been done.

¶4. (C) Even erstwhile allies now appear to be deserting Geoana. PSD spokesman Cristy Diaconescu told DCM that Geoana had blown a big opportunity in June to come to terms politically with the PD and to form a new government under a PSD Prime Minister. While Basascu had made it clear that it was impossible for him to appoint Geoana to the post after

having led the suspension episode against him last spring, Geoana had insisted that he had to be Prime Minister or there would be no deal. Diaconescu said that this had been a selfish choice--and the wrong one--and while Geoana had scrambled to undo the damage within his party, his hand was now much weaker and his political future was now in the hands of others.

¶15. (C) Diaconescu opined that it was unclear which way the no-confidence vote would go, but was clearly unenthusiastic. He acknowledged that both Iliescu and Senate President Vacaroiu had forcefully argued against the motion at a PSD executive meeting, and party leaders and rank and file supporters were concerned with what scenarios might come in play should the censure motion carry. He noted that party bosses at the local and regional levels were concerned about the no-win, no-glory cohabitation with the Liberals, and even the inclusion of some PSD ministers in a new cabinet would benefit a few PSD individuals only and not the entire party. Diaconescu added that cohabitation with the PNL would only expose the basic incompatibility between the two parties and that their divergent political programs would come into sharper relief as the electoral exercises got under way in November and continued through next year. He concluded that "the mamaliga (the Romanian word for polenta) was exploding".

¶16. (C) Comment: More twists and turns will likely ensue, but there is every indication that Geoana's gambit may have backfired. While intended to pressure Prime Minister Tariceanu into new concessions as the price for continued PSD support, the ploy has instead exposed the fissures within the PSD's own ranks. Geoana had earlier abandoned the reformist "Cluj Group" in order to enlist the support of party seniors including Iliescu and PSD Chamber of Deputies Whip Viorel Hrebenciuc, and it appears that he has now alienated both old

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and new allies alike. Iliescu and other party seniors are now trying to sideline Geoana, and the wily Hrebenciuc has kept a conspicuously low profile in recent days. In a September 12 conversation with the DCM, Nastase likened Geoana's no-confidence gambit to a surgeon who makes an incision without having decided what kind of operation to perform. He predicted that the motion would never be introduced that the PSD might instead table a budget resolution that would provide a face-saving recipe for declaring "victory". Meanwhile, the PNL appears to be ill-disposed to provide Geoana any sort of lifeline. Speaking on behalf of his party in a press interview September 14, PNL Deputy Crin Antonescu remarked that given that the PSD was itself in a "deep crisis" his party preferred to take its chances with a no-confidence vote rather than offer any further concessions to the PSD. End Comment.

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